

Capitalization Style for the Word “braille”

A Position Statement of
the Braille Authority of North America

Adopted November 2006

Background

Many individuals, organizations, corporations and government agencies have asked the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) what its policy is on the preferred capitalization style for the word “braille.” Believing that the issue is a true policy matter with far-reaching implications, BANA, as the standard-setting body for braille in the United States and Canada, is issuing a policy statement on this matter.

Most agencies and organizations in the blindness field throughout the world follow the practice that does not capitalize the word “braille” unless referring to the name of Louis Braille or to a proper name such as Braille and Talking Book Library (agency); Braille ‘n’ Speak (product name); or *Braille Formats: Principles of Print to Braille Transcription* (book title).

Even though the tactile reading system was named after an individual, it does not necessarily follow that the word be capitalized. This type of word is termed an eponym, a word that comes from someone’s name. Consider the words “watt,” “mach,” “sandwich,” “tattersall,” “foley,” “wellerism,” “bowdlerize,” “spoonerism,” and many others. All were once people’s names, or referred to a specific person. They are now just nouns and verbs spelled without a capital letter. Their lowercase status was acquired because the word has assumed such a commonplace role in the language.

“Braille,” as the representation of the code created by Louis Braille, has become an important, recognized, and commonplace part of the landscape of life. True acceptance of braille as a viable

medium for reading and not a special or unusual item includes not setting it apart by writing it differently. As testament to its acceptance, it has acquired the right to appear in the language as a lowercase word.

Efforts are ongoing with style manual publishers and the makers of the Microsoft Office Suite dictionary, to advise them that the blindness community prefers the word “Braille” to be represented as “braille.”

Position

BANA recommends that the word “braille,” when referring to the code developed by Louis Braille, be written with an initial lowercase letter. When referring to the proper name of Louis Braille, the inventor of the reading system, the initial letter should be capitalized.

For more information about the Braille Authority of North America, visit www.brailleauthority.org.